

Feelings vs. Spiritual Well-Being

by John Newton

John Newton emphasizes the importance of faith and dependence on God during varying spiritual experiences and feelings.

Scripture: Psalm 119:71, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Philippians 4:12, James 4:10, 1 Peter 5:6

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Gods Sovereignty"

Description

John Newton preaches about the importance of enduring chastisement and trusting in God's sovereignty, even in times of illness and uncertainty. He emphasizes the varying experiences of believers in their relationship with God, highlighting the need for a deep sense of dependence and humility. Newton encourages a broken and contrite spirit, coupled with a genuine acceptance of Jesus, as the highest attainment in the Christian walk. He stresses that faith and growth in grace can still occur during dark and low seasons, showcasing a soul's earnest pursuit of the Lord as a strong evidence of true grace.

Transcript

January 11, 1777.

Dear Sir,

We all need, and at the seasons the Lord sees best, we all receive chastisement. I hope you likewise have reason to praise Him, for supporting, sanctifying, and delivering mercy. The cowardly flesh presently sinks under the rod, but faith need not fear it, for it is in the hand of One who loves us better than we do ourselves, and who knows our frame, that we are but dust, and therefore will not suffer us to be overdone and overwhelmed.

I feel as a friend should feel for Mr. B---; were I able, I would soon send him health. If the Lord, who is able to remove his illness in a minute, permits it to continue, we may be sure, upon the whole, it will be better for him. It is, however, very lawful to pray that his health may be restored, and his usefulness prolonged. I beg you to give my love to him, and tell him that my heart bears him an affectionate remembrance; and I know the God whom he serves will make every dispensation supportable and profitable to him.

If, as you observe, the Song of Solomon describes the experience of his church, it shows the dark as well as the bright side. No one part of it is the experience of every individual at any particular time. Some are in his banqueting-house, others upon their beds. Some sit under His banner, supported by His arm; while

others have a faint perception of Him at a distance, with many a hill and mountain between. In one thing, however, they all agree, that He is the leading object of their desires, and that they have had such a discovery of His person, work, and love, as makes Him precious to their hearts. Their judgment of Him is always the same, but their sensibility varies. The love they bear Him, though rooted and grounded in their hearts, is not always equally in exercise, nor can it be so. We are like trees, which, though alive, cannot put forth their leaves and fruit without the influence of the sun. They are alive in winter as well as in summer; but how different is their appearance in these different seasons! Were we always alike, could we always believe, love, and rejoice, we should think the power inherent and our own; but it is more for the Lord's glory, and more suited to form us to a temper becoming the Gospel, that we should be made deeply sensible of our own inability and dependence, than that we should be always in a lively frame. I am persuaded, a broken and a contrite spirit, a conviction of our vileness and nothingness, connected with a cordial acceptance of Jesus as revealed in the Gospel, is the highest attainment we can reach in this life. Sensible comforts are desirable, and we must be sadly declined when they do not appear to us; but I believe there may be a real exercise of faith and growth in grace when our sensible feelings are faint and low. A soul may be in as thriving a state when thirsting, seeking, and mourning after the Lord, as when actually rejoicing in Him; as much in earnest when fighting in the valley, as when singing upon the mount; nay, dark seasons afford the surest and strongest manifestations of the power of faith. To hold fast the word of promise, to maintain a hatred of sin, to go on steadfastly in the path of duty, in defiance both of the frowns and the smiles of the world, when we have but little comfort, is a more certain evidence of grace, than a thousand things which we may do or forbear when our spirits are warm and lively. I have seen many who have been upon the whole but uneven walkers, though at times they have seemed to enjoy, at least have talked of, great comforts. I have seen others, for the most part, complain of much darkness and coldness, who have been remarkably humble, tender, and exemplary in their spirit and conduct. Surely were I to choose my lot, it should be with the latter.

I am, &c.

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